

Weekly Compilation of  
**Presidential  
Documents**



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**Editor’s Note:** The President was at Camp David, MD, on May 23, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

## WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

## PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, May 23, 2008

**Notice—Continuation of the  
National Emergency With Respect to  
Burma**

*May 16, 2008*

On May 20, 1997, the President issued Executive Order 13047, certifying to the Congress under section 570(b) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997 (Public Law 104–208), that the Government of Burma has engaged in large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in Burma after September 30, 1996, thereby invoking the prohibition on new investment in Burma by United States persons contained in that section. The President also declared a national emergency to deal with the threat posed to the national security and foreign policy of the United States by the actions and policies of the Government of Burma, invoking the authority, *inter alia*, of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*

On July 28, 2003, I issued Executive Order 13310 taking additional steps with respect to that national emergency by putting in place an import ban required by the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 and prohibiting exports of financial services to Burma and the dealing in property in which certain designated Burmese persons have an interest. On October 18, 2007, I issued Executive Order 13448 to expand prohibitions to include the Burmese regime’s financial supporters and their companies, as well as individuals determined to be responsible for or to have participated in human rights abuses or to have engaged in activities facilitating public corruption. On April 30, 2008, I issued Executive Order 13464 taking additional steps with respect to the Government of Burma’s continued repression of the democratic opposition in Burma.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Burma continue to pose an

unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 20, 1997, and expanded on October 18, 2007, and April 30, 2008, and the measures adopted to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond May 20, 2008. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to Burma. This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
May 16, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register,  
10:03 a.m., May 16, 2008]

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 17, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on May 19.

**Message to the Congress on  
Continuation of the National  
Emergency With Respect to Burma**  
*May 16, 2008*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Burma emergency is to continue beyond May 20, 2008.

The crisis between the United States and Burma arising from the actions and policies of the Government of Burma, including its

engaging in large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in Burma, that led to the declaration of a national emergency on May 20, 1997, and its expansion on October 18, 2007, and April 30, 2008, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma and maintain in force the sanctions against Burma to respond to this threat. This action does not inhibit any efforts on the part of the United States to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
May 16, 2008.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 17.

**Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and an Exchange With Reporters in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt**  
*May 17, 2008*

**President Bush.** Mr. President, good to see you. Thanks. President Karzai and I have had a lot of meetings together, and this was a very upbeat meeting. And I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate your courage. Appreciate you taking on a very tough assignment, which is helping your young democracy survive amidst the threats from the radicals and extremists.

I really appreciate the briefing you gave me on how you're going to approach the Paris donor's meeting. This is a great opportunity for the world to help Afghanistan grow and prosper. His strategy is a smart strategy. And part of his strategy is to—is for the world to help Afghanistan's agricultural community grow and prosper, so that they can not only become self-sufficient in food but become net exporters of crops that people need in order to be able to eat and survive.

And so I thought it was a smart approach. I hope the world rallies to your behalf. We'll certainly help. I appreciate you being here.

**President Karzai.** Thank you very much.

**President Bush.** Yes, sir.

**President Karzai.** Thank you very much. Well, Mr. President, thank you very much for this very good meeting once again. We have always had very good meetings with you in the past. This one was one more of such meetings. And thank you very much once again, Mr. President, for the help that you have given us in the past 6 years—6½ years in Afghanistan.

I told you about a story earlier, that we, for the first time after 30 years, were able to give diplomas to the graduates of Afghanistan's universities, the medical colleges, economics, law, and all that. That would have not been possible without your help and the help of the rest of the world.

And thank you very much for the support on Paris. We'll be going to Paris to ask for more help for Afghanistan's agriculture, so that Afghanistan can become self-sufficient in agriculture and also be an exporter to the rest of the world. And we'll be asking for help on energy resources in Afghanistan and the—better irrigation and hydro projects.

Afghanistan once again thanks the people of the United States. Mr. President, thank you very much, and please convey that gratitude to the American people. And please do visit us very, very soon. The Afghan people want to be there to greet you and to express the gratitude for your leadership and help.

**President Bush.** Thank you, sir. Thank you. I'll take two questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

**Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** Mr. President, Egypt's state-owned media says that you have tilted too far toward Israel. One of them, the newspaper, says that you aim to do nothing but appeasing Israel. Did you encounter that attitude today, and what do you say to this?

**President Bush.** Actually, in my meeting with the President of Egypt, he wanted to make sure that my approach toward the Middle Eastern peace is firm, and that we work hard to get the Palestinian state defined. And in my speech tomorrow, I'll make it clear that

I believe we can get a state defined by the end of my Presidency, and we'll work hard to achieve that objective. I had conversations with Prime Minister Olmert and others in his Government to that effect. I will have conversations with President Abbas and people in his Government tonight.

Every one of these meetings helps advance the process. Every one of these meetings helps us inch toward the goal of getting a state defined with borders and the refugee issue as well as security concerns defined by the end of my Presidency. And I believe we can do that, and I know it's going to be important for the peace in the Middle East.

John [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal], yes.

#### ***Saudi Arabia/Oil Production***

**Q.** Mr. President, can you talk a little bit more about your meetings with officials in Saudi Arabia? And are you satisfied with the response that they gave you on oil?

**President Bush.** Look, my—with—His Majesty is—he kindly called in the Energy Minister, who, I think, was in Korea. And the man flew back to talk with us. I said very plainly, I said, you've got to be concerned about the effects of high oil prices on some of the biggest customers in the world. And not only that, of course, high energy prices is going to cause countries like mine to accelerate our move toward alternative energy.

And as the Minister said yesterday, that Saudi Arabia, this year, has increased the number of barrels of oil per day by 300,000 a day, and they're increasing refining capacity, which is not enough. It's something, but it doesn't solve our problem. Our problem in America gets solved when we aggressively go for domestic exploration. Our problem in America gets solved if we expand our refining capacity, promote nuclear energy, and continue our strategy for the advancement of alternative energies as well as conservation.

And one of the interesting things about American politics these days is, those who are screaming the loudest for increased production from Saudi Arabia are the very same people who are fighting the fiercest against domestic exploration, against the development of nuclear power, and against expanding refining capacity. And so I was pleased

that they had increased production by 300,000. But I'm also realistic to say to the American people, we've got to do more at home, and we need a Congress who will be responsive to those requests.

Thank you all very much for your interest.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh. In his remarks, he referred to President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Ibrahim al-Naimi of Saudi Arabia.

#### **The President's Radio Address**

*May 17, 2008*

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from the Middle East, where Laura and I are on a trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

When Air Force One touched down at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, I was greeted by Israel's President and Prime Minister. I joined them in celebrating an historic milestone, Israel's 60th anniversary as an independent nation. And I assured them that Israel could count on America as a strong and steady ally long into the future.

During our visit, I had conversation with Israel's leaders about their efforts to forge peace with the Palestinians and our shared belief that a peace agreement is possible this year. I also had the opportunity to address members of the Knesset, Israel's elected legislature. I reminded these democratic leaders that America was the first nation in the world to recognize Israel's independence. I told them that 60 years later, America is proud to be Israel's best friend in the world. I reaffirmed the principles that make our alliance strong: a love of liberty, a devotion to justice, and a respect for human dignity. And I said that standing firm on these ideals is the surest way to defeat the extremists and build a future of peace for people throughout the Middle East.

For Laura and me, this visit to Israel was an especially moving experience. We toured the Bible Lands Museum, saw the Dead Sea Scrolls, and visited Masada, an inspiring

shrine to Jewish courage and sacrifice in the first century. From the window of our hotel room, we had a magnificent view of the Old City of Jerusalem, home to some of the holiest sites in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And on our final morning in the city, we met some of Israel's young people, talented and hopeful citizens who gave me confidence in Israel's future.

On Friday, we visited another of America's friends in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia. I had a series of productive meetings with King Abdallah at his farm. We celebrated the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. We reaffirmed our shared objectives of peace in the Holy Land, a secure and united Iraq, and a sovereign, independent Lebanon that is free of outside interference. We talked about oil production and gasoline prices. We discussed the King's efforts to diversify his nation's economy and the importance of political reform. And I thanked him for Saudi Arabia's strong commitment to fighting terror.

Our final stop is Egypt, where we are visiting the beautiful resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh. I am meeting with a number of key leaders from the region, including President Mubarak of Egypt, President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, King Abdullah of Jordan, President Karzai of Afghanistan, Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan, and several senior officials from Iraq's democracy.

I will also address the World Economic Forum in the Middle East. I will stress the importance of building dynamic and diverse economies that unleash the creativity and enterprise of citizens throughout the region, especially women and young people. I will make clear that the only way to ensure true prosperity is to expand political and economic freedom. And I will urge leaders across the region to reject spoilers, such as the regimes in Iran and Syria, move past old grievances, and embrace the changes necessary for a day when societies across the Middle East are based on justice, tolerance, and freedom.

Reaching that day will not be easy. But with continued leadership from America and our friends in the region, I am confident that it can happen. And when that day arrives,

the Middle East will be more hopeful, the world will be more peaceful, and the American people will be more secure.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 p.m. on May 15 at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, Israel, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on May 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 16 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. Due to the 7-hour time difference, the radio address was broadcast after the President's meeting with President Karzai and before his meeting with President Abbas in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. In his address, the President referred to President Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

### **Remarks Following a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in Sharm el-Sheikh**

*May 17, 2008*

**President Bush.** Mr. President, thank you for your time, and thank you for your courage.

We talked about two issues primarily. First, I do want to discuss Lebanon. The President is deeply concerned about Lebanon, the fate of the Siniora Government, as am I. We're concerned about radical elements undermining the democracy. It is clear that Hizballah, which has been funded by Iran, can no longer justify its position as a defender against Israel when it turns on its own people. This is a defining moment. It's a moment that requires us to stand strongly with the Siniora Government and to support the Siniora Government. And the President was quite articulate about his concerns. And I appreciate you sharing your strategy with me.

And then we talked, of course, about the Palestinian state. I told the President that I am absolutely committed to working with he and his negotiators, as well as the Israelis, to get a state defined. And I do so for a couple of reasons. One, it breaks my heart to

see the vast potential of the Palestinian people really wasted. These are good, smart, capable people that, when given a chance, will build a thriving homeland. It'll be an opportunity to end the suffering that takes place in the Palestinian Territory.

And the second reason I am for it is because it's the only way for lasting peace. The President and his team are committed to peace. They stand squarely against those who use violence to stop the peace process. And for that I admire you and your team, Mr. President. And I commit to you once again that my Government will help achieve a dream, a dream that you have—and the truth of the matter is, a dream that the Israelis have—which is two states living side by side in peace.

So thank you for coming.

**President Abbas.** Thank you.

**President Bush.** Appreciate you.

**President Abbas.** Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving us today. Of course, we have talked about the peace process and the negotiations that are taking place these days between us and the Israeli side. We know very well that you personally, as well as your administration, are committed to reach peace before the end of 2008. Therefore, we are working very seriously and very aggressively with the hope that we will be able to achieve this objective before the end of the year.

We have talked with the President about the details of the negotiations that are taking place between our side and the Israeli side. And of course, we also talked about a wide range of issues that affect the entire region, but also affects the Palestinian people, because it is very important for us that the entire Arab region will be living in stability in order to be able to achieve peace in our Palestinian Territory.

We are very delighted that the President is following all the details of everything and every discussion that is taking place in the Palestinian negotiations as well as issues in the region.

Therefore, we're delighted to continue our engagement with you, Mr. President, in order to be able to achieve all the objectives which are ours and yours at the same time.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:39 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

### **Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani of Pakistan in Sharm el-Sheikh May 18, 2008**

**President Bush.** Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for coming. It's the first time we've had a chance to visit. I appreciate the very candid discussion we had. I appreciate the fact that you're committed to working to make sure that relations between the United States and Pakistan are strong and vibrant and productive.

And one area where our relations can be productive is to cooperate on economic matters, because the truth of the matter is, in a population that has got hope as a result of being able to find work is a population that is going to make it harder for extremists and terrorists to find safe haven.

And so I appreciate very much our candid discussion about the economy. I fully understand that you're dealing with serious food prices. I appreciate the compassion you showed for the people of Pakistan. I told the President—the Prime Minister that one thing we can do, having talked to the President of Afghanistan, is help Afghanistan grow wheat, help Afghanistan become self-sufficient, which will take the pressure off of the people of Pakistan.

The Prime Minister and I talked, of course, about our common desire to protect ourselves and others from those who would do harm. And I want to thank your steadfast support and your strength of character and your understanding of the problems we face. Relations are good between our two countries, and they will continue to be good. And I want to thank you for coming and to—and advancing those relations.

**Prime Minister Gilani.** Thank you.

**President Bush.** Welcome.

**Prime Minister Gilani.** Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity. I want to take your call to confidence that, with the change of the new



Government in Pakistan, with a new democratic Government in this country, there's a change for the system. And I've been unanimously elected as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. That's the first time in the history of Pakistan. And we have discussed in detail on a few issues like economics, like the food problems, like the energy problems.

And the common problem—and that is the biggest threat to the world—is terrorism and extremism. And our Government is committed to fight for terrorism and extremism. It is against the humanity; it's against the world. And I have lost my own great leader, Benazir Bhutto, because of terrorism. Therefore, I pledge and I stand by the world to fight against extremism and terrorism.

I appreciate the support of Mr. President for our concerns on both social sectors, economic sectors, energy sectors. And we want to work together on all these issues. And I once again thank Mr. President for extending this opportunity.

**President Bush.** Yes, sir, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

**Prime Minister Gilani.** Thank you so much.

**President Bush.** Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

### Remarks Following a Meeting With Iraqi Leaders in Sharm el-Sheikh

May 18, 2008

**President Bush.** I just had a discussion with the Vice President, the Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister of the sovereign nation of Iraq. I told them that I'm impressed by the progress that's taking place, the security progress. We talked about Basra and the success of the Iraqi Government in Basra in dealing with Shi'a extremists.

We talked about the economic progress that is being made. We also talked about the fact that there's—more work needs to be done, that this is—you know, there's still problems. But the good news is, is that these three leaders recognize the problems, and

they have got solutions to deal with the problems.

And finally, we talked about the need for the people in the Middle East to understand the importance of a successful Iraq. And these three men are courageous men. They're smart, capable people who are—who represent the Iraqi people with a lot of dignity.

And I welcome you here, Mr. Vice President. Thank you for coming.

**Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi.** Thank you, Mr. President. We had a very good meeting with President Bush, who always supported Iraq. And we assessed the progress that we did on all levels—security, politics, even economical progress. It's a regular relationship, and international community progress has been marked all of the—on those levels.

We also assessed the future, what we should do in the future, the long-term relationship, other issues of economic kind, and also the regional issue.

So we are working together, really, Iraq with the United States. And we were always optimistic, even in the worst days. And we now—today, we realize how—the importance of our work, of the cooperation between the United States and Iraq, and we'll continue that.

**President Bush.** Thank you all.

**Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh. Participating in the meeting were Vice President Adil Abd Al-Mahdi, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoshyar Mahmud Zebari of Iraq.

### Remarks to the World Economic Forum in Sharm el-Sheikh

May 18, 2008

Klaus, thank you very much. Thanks for inviting me. Klaus said, "It's about time you showed up." Proud to be here. Laura and I are so honored that, Klaus, you gave us a chance to come. I do want to thank President Mubarak and Mrs. Mubarak for their wonderful hospitality. I want to thank the

Members of Congress who are here. I appreciate the heads of state who've joined us. I thank the foreign ministers who are here, including my own, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. And I want to thank the members of the diplomatic corps.

Laura and I are delighted to be in Egypt, and we bring the warm wishes of the American people. We're proud of our long friendship with your citizens. We respect your remarkable history. And we're humbled to walk in the ancient land of pharaohs, where a great civilization took root and wrote some of the first chapters in the epic story of humanity.

America is a much younger nation, but we've made our mark by advancing ideals as old as the pyramids. Those ideals of liberty and justice have sparked a revolution across much of the world. This hopeful movement made its way to places where dictators once reigned and peaceful democracies seemed unimaginable, places like Chile and Indonesia and Poland and the Philippines and South Korea.

These nations have different histories and different traditions. Yet each made the same democratic transition, and they did it on their own terms. In these countries, millions every year are rising from poverty. Women are realizing overdue opportunities. And people of faith are finding the blessing of worshiping God in peace.

All these changes took place in the second half of the 20th century. I strongly believe that if leaders, like those of you in this room, act with vision and resolve, the first half of the 21st century can be the time when similar advances reach the Middle East. This region is home to energetic people, a powerful spirit of enterprise, and tremendous resources. It is capable of a very bright future, a future in which the Middle East is a place of innovation and discovery driven by free men and women.

In recent years, we've seen hopeful beginnings toward this vision. Turkey, a nation with a majority Muslim population, is a prosperous, modern democracy. Afghanistan, under the leadership of President Karzai, is overcoming the Taliban and building a free society. Iraq, under the leadership of Prime Minister Maliki, is establishing a multiethnic democracy. We've seen the stirrings of re-

form from Morocco and Algeria to Jordan and the Gulf States. And isolation from the outside world is being overcome by the most democratic of innovations: the cell phone and the Internet. America appreciates the challenges facing the Middle East. Yet the light of liberty is beginning to shine.

There's much to do to build on this momentum. From diversifying your economies to investing in your people to extending the reach of freedom, nations across the region have an opportunity to move forward with bold and confident reforms and to lead the Middle East to its rightful place as a center of progress and achievement.

Taking your place as a center of progress and achievement requires economic reform. This is a time of strength for many of your nations' economies. Since 2004, economic growth in the region has averaged more than 5 percent. Trade has expanded significantly. Technology has advanced rapidly. Foreign investment has increased dramatically. And unemployment rates have decreased in many nations.

Egypt, for example, has posted strong economic growth, developed some of the world's fastest growing telecommunications companies, and made major investments that will boost tourism and trade. In order for this economic progress to result in permanent prosperity and an Egypt that reaches its full potential, however, economic reform must be accompanied by political reform. And I continue to hope that Egypt can lead the region in political reform.

This is also a time to prepare for the economic changes ahead. Rising price of oil has brought great wealth to some in this region, but the supply of oil is limited, and nations like mine are aggressively developing alternatives to oil. Over time, as the world becomes less dependent on oil, nations in the Middle East will have to build more diverse and more dynamic economies.

Your greatest asset in this quest is the entrepreneurial spirit of your people. The best way to take advantage of that spirit is to make reforms that unleash individual creativity and innovation. Your economies will be more vibrant when citizens who dream of starting their own companies can do so quickly, without high regulatory and registration costs.

Your economies will be more dynamic when property rights are protected and risk-taking is encouraged, not punished, by law. Your economies will be more resilient when you adopt modern agricultural techniques that make farmers more productive and the food supply more secure. And your economies will have greater long-term prosperity when taxes are low and all your citizens know that their innovation and hard work will be rewarded.

One of the most powerful drivers of economic growth is free trade. So nations in this region would benefit greatly from breaking down barriers to trade with each other. And America will continue working to open up trade at every level.

In recent years, the United States has completed free trade agreements with Jordan, Oman, Morocco, and Bahrain. America will continue to negotiate bilateral free trade agreements in the region. We strongly supported Saudi Arabia's accession to the World Trade Organization, and we will continue to support nations making the reforms necessary to join the institutions of a global economy. And to break down trade barriers and ignite economic growth around the world, we will work tirelessly for a successful outcome to the Doha round this year.

As we seek to open up new markets abroad, America will keep our markets open at home. There are voices in my country that urge America to adopt measures that would isolate us from the global economy. I firmly reject these calls for protectionism. We will continue to welcome foreign investment and trade. And the United States of America will stay open for business.

Taking your place as a center of progress and achievement requires investing in your people. Some analysts believe the Middle East and north Africa will need to create up to 100 million new jobs over the next 10 to 15 years just to keep up with population growth. The key to realizing this goal is an educated workforce.

This starts early on, with primary schools that teach basic skills such as reading and math rather than indoctrinating children with ideologies of hatred. An educated workforce also requires good high schools and universities where students are exposed to a variety

of ideas, learn to think for themselves, and develop the capacity to innovate.

Not long ago, the region marked a hopeful milestone in higher education. In our meeting yesterday, President Karzai told me he recently handed out diplomas to university graduates, including 300 degrees in medicine and 100 degrees in engineering and a lot of degrees to lawyers. And many of the recipients were women.

The people of the Middle East can count on the United States to be a strong partner in improving your educational systems. We're sponsoring training programs for teachers and administrators in nations like Jordan and Morocco and Lebanon. We sponsored English language programs where students can go for intensive language instruction. We've translated more than 80 children's books into Arabic. We've developed new online curricula for students from kindergarten through high school.

It is also in America's interest to continue welcoming aspiring young adults from this region for higher education to the United States. There were understandable concerns about student visas after 9/11. My administration has worked hard to improve the visa process. And I'm pleased to report that we are issuing a growing numbers of student visas to young people from the Middle East. And that's the way it should be. And we'll continue to work to expand educational exchanges, because we benefit from the contribution of foreign students who study in America, because we're proud to train the world's leaders of tomorrow, and because we know there is no better antidote to the propaganda of our enemies than firsthand experience with life in the United States of America.

Building powerful economies also requires expanding the role of women in society. This is a matter of morality and of basic math. No nation that cuts off half its population from opportunities will be as productive or prosperous as it could be. Women are a formidable force, as I have seen in my own family—[laughter]—and my own administration. As the nations of the Middle East open up their laws and their societies to women, they are learning the same thing.

I applaud Egypt. Egypt is a model for the development of professional women. In Afghanistan, girls who were once denied even a basic education are now going to school, and a whole generation of Afghans will grow up with the intellectual tools to lead their nation toward prosperity. In Iraq and in Kuwait, women are joining political parties and running campaigns and serving in public office. In some Gulf States, women entrepreneurs are making a living and a name for themselves in the business world.

Recently, I learned of a woman in Bahrain who owns her own shipping company. She started with a small office and two employees. When she first tried to register her business in her own name, she was turned down. She attended a business training class and was the only woman to participate. And when she applied for a customs license, officials expressed surprise because no woman had ever asked for one before.

And yet with hard work and determination, she turned her small company into a \$2 million enterprise. And this year, Huda Janahi was named one of the 50 most powerful businesswomen in the Arab world. Huda is an inspiring example for the whole region. And America's message to other women in the Middle East is this: You have a great deal to contribute; you should have a strong voice in leading your countries; and my Nation looks to the day when you have the rights and privileges you deserve.

Taking your place as a center of progress and achievement requires extending the reach of freedom. Expanding freedom is vital to turning temporary wealth into lasting prosperity. Free societies stimulate competition in the marketplace. Free societies give people access to information they need to make informed and responsible decisions. And free societies give citizens the rule of law, which exposes corruption and builds confidence in the future.

Freedom is also the basis for a democratic system of government, which is the only fair and just ordering of society and the only way to guarantee the God-given rights of all people. Democracies do not take the same shape. They develop at different speeds and in different ways, and they reflect the unique cultures and traditions of their people. There

are skeptics about democracy in this part of the world. I understand that. But as more people in the Middle East gain firsthand experience from freedom, many of the arguments against democracy are being discredited.

For example, some say that democracy is a Western value that America seeks to impose on unwilling citizens. This is a condescending form of moral relativism. The truth is that freedom is a universal right, the Almighty's gift to every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth. And as we've seen time and time again, when people are allowed to make a choice between freedom and the alternative, they choose freedom.

In Afghanistan, 8 million people defied the terrorist threats to vote for a democratic President. In Iraq, 12 million people waved ink-stained fingers to celebrate the first democratic election in decades. And in a recent survey of the Muslim world, there was overwhelming support for one of the central tenets of democracy: freedom of speech—99 percent in Lebanon, 94 percent here in Egypt, and 92 percent in Iran.

There are people who claim that democracy is incompatible with Islam. But the truth is that democracies, by definition, make a place for people of religious belief. America is one of the most—is one of the world's leading democracies, and we're also one of the most religious nations in the world. More than three-quarters of our citizens believe in a higher power. Millions worship every week and pray every day, and they do so without fear of reprisal from the state. In our democracy, we would never punish a person for owning a Koran. We would never issue a death sentence to someone for converting to Islam. Democracy does not threaten Islam or any religion. Democracy is the only system of government that guarantees their protection.

Some say any state that holds an election is a democracy. But true democracy requires vigorous political parties allowed to engage in free and lively debate. True democracy requires the establishment of civic institutions that ensure an election's legitimacy and hold leaders accountable. And true democracy requires competitive elections in which

opposition candidates are allowed to campaign without fear or intimidation.

Too often in the Middle East, politics has consisted of one leader in power and the opposition in jail. America is deeply concerned about the plight of political prisoners in this region as well as democratic activists who are intimidated or repressed, newspapers and civil society organizations that are shut down, and dissidents whose voices are stifled. The time has come for nations across the Middle East to abandon these practices and treat their people with dignity and the respect they deserve. I call on all nations to release their prisoners of conscience, open up their political debate, and trust their people to chart their future.

The vision I have outlined today is shared by many in this region, but unfortunately, there are some spoilers who stand in the way. Terrorist organizations and their state sponsors know they cannot survive in a free society, so they create chaos and take innocent lives in an effort to stop democracy from taking root. They are on the wrong side in a great ideological struggle, and every nation committed to freedom and progress in the Middle East must stand together to defeat them.

We must stand with the Palestinian people, who have suffered for decades and earned the right to be a homeland of their own—to have a homeland of their own. I strongly support a two-state solution, a democratic Palestine based on law and justice that will live with peace and security alongside a democrat Israel. I believe that the Palestinian people will build a thriving democracy in which entrepreneurs pursue their dreams, and families own their homes in lively communities, and young people grow up with hope in the future.

Last year at Annapolis, we made a hopeful beginning toward a peace negotiation that will outline what this nation of Palestine will look like, a contiguous state where Palestinians live in prosperity and dignity. A peace agreement is in the Palestinians' interests; it is in Israel's interests; it is in Arab States' interests; and it is in the world's interests. And I firmly believe that with leadership and courage, we can reach that peace agreement this year.

This is a demanding task. It requires action on all sides. Palestinians must fight terror and continue to build the institutions of a free and peaceful society. Israel must make tough sacrifices for peace and ease the restrictions on the Palestinians. Arab States, especially oil-rich nations, must seize this opportunity to invest aggressively in the Palestinian people and to move past their old resentments against Israel. And all nations in the region must stand together in confronting Hamas, which is attempting to undermine efforts at peace with acts of terror and violence.

We must stand with the people of Lebanon in their struggle to build a sovereign and independent democracy. This means opposing Hizballah terrorists funded by Iran, who recently revealed their true intentions by taking up arms against the Lebanese people. It is now clearer than ever that Hizballah militias are the enemy of a free Lebanon. And all nations, especially neighbors in the region, have an interest to help the Lebanese people prevail.

We must stand with the people of Iraq and Afghanistan and other nations in the region fighting against Al Qaida and other extremists. Bin Laden and his followers have made clear that anyone who does not share their extremist ideology is fit for murder. That means every government in the Middle East is a target of Al Qaida. And America is a target too. And together we will confront and we will defeat this threat to civilization.

We must stand with the good and decent people of Iran and Syria, who deserve so much better than the life they have today. Every peaceful nation in the region has an interest in stopping these nations from supporting terrorism. And every peaceful nation in the region has an interest in opposing Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. To allow the world's leading sponsor of terror to gain the world's deadliest weapon would be an unforgivable betrayal of future generations. For the sake of peace, the world must not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

Changes I have discussed today will not come easily. Change never does. But the reform movement in the Middle East has a powerful engine: demographics. Sixty percent of the population is under 30 years old. Many of these young people surf the Web,

own cell phones, have satellite televisions. They have access to unprecedented amounts of information. They see what freedom has brought to millions of others and contrast that to what they have at home.

Today I have a message for these young people. Some tell you—some will tell you change is impossible, but history has a way of surprising us, and change can happen more quickly than we expect. In the past century, one concept has transcended borders, cultures, and languages: in Arabic, *hurriyya*; in English, freedom. Across the world, the call for freedom lives in our hearts, endures in our prayers, and joins humanity as one.

I know these are trying times, but the future is in your hands, and freedom and peace are within your grasp. Just imagine what this region could look like in 60 years. The Palestinian people will have the homeland they have long dreamed of and deserved, a democratic state that is governed by law, respects human rights, and rejects terror. Israel will be celebrating its 120 anniversary as one of the world's great democracies, a secure and flourishing homeland for the Jewish people.

From Cairo, Riyadh, Baghdad to Beirut, people will live in free and independent societies, where a desire for peace is reinforced by ties of diplomacy and tourism and trade. Iran and Syria will be peaceful nations, where today's oppression is a distant memory and people are free to speak their minds and develop their talents. Al Qaida, Hizballah, and Hamas will be defeated, as Muslims across the region recognize the emptiness of the terrorists' vision and the injustice of their cause.

This vision is the same one I outlined in my address to the Israeli Knesset. Yet it's not a Jewish vision or a Muslim vision, not an American vision or an Arab vision. It is a universal vision based on the timeless principles of dignity and tolerance and justice, and it unites all who yearn for freedom and peace in this ancient land.

Realizing this vision will not be easy. It will take time and sacrifice and resolve. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that you are up to the challenge, and with your ingenuity and your enterprise and your courage, this historic vision for the Middle East will be realized.

May God be with you on this journey, and the United States of America will be at your side.

Thank you for having me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. at the Maritim Sharm El Sheikh International Congress Center. In his remarks, he referred to Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman, World Economic Forum; President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and his wife, Suzanne Thabet; Huda Janahi, managing director, Global Cargo & Traveller's Services; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

### **Interview With Richard Engel of NBC News in Sharm el-Sheikh**

*May 18, 2008*

**Mr. Engel.** Mr. President, thank you very much for joining me.

**The President.** Richard. Thank you, sir.

### **President's Remarks at the Knesset in Jerusalem, Israel**

**Mr. Engel.** In front of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, you said that negotiating with Iran is pointless. And then you went further, you saying—you said that it was appeasement. Were you referring to Senator Barak Obama? He certainly thought you were.

**The President.** You know, my policies haven't changed, but evidently the political calendar has. People need to read the speech. You didn't get it exactly right either. What I said was, is that we need to take the words of people seriously. And when, you know, a leader of Iran says that they want to destroy Israel, you got to take those words seriously. And if you don't take them seriously, then it harkens back to a day when we didn't take other words seriously.

It was fitting that I talked about not taking the words of Adolph Hitler seriously on the floor of the Knesset. But I also talked about the need to defend Israel, the need to not negotiate with the likes of Al Qaida and Hizballah and Hamas, and the need to make sure Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon. It was a—but I also talked about a vision of what's possible in the Middle East.

**Iran**

**Mr. Engel.** Repeatedly, you've talked about Iran and that you don't want to see Iran develop a nuclear weapon.

**The President.** Yes.

**Mr. Engel.** How far away do you think Iran is from developing a nuclear capability?

**The President.** You know, Richard, I don't want to speculate, and there's a lot of speculation. But one thing is for certain: We need to prevent them from learning how to enrich uranium. And I have made it clear to the Iranians that there is a seat at the table for them if they would verifiably suspend their enrichment. And if not, we'll continue to rally the world to isolate them.

**U.S. Foreign Policy/Iran**

**Mr. Engel.** You've been rallying the world. Have you had some success on this Arab tour to try and—and Israeli tour—to mobilize this community against Iran? Is that part of your mission?

**The President.** No, it's not so much—actually, the place where I'm spending time, in terms of dealing with serious economic isolation, is with our European friends. They're the ones who have had significant trade with the Iranians. We're dealing with it not only in goods and services, trying to convince them to hold back goods and services until there's a verifiable suspension, but also dealing with the Iranian finances.

I don't have to spend too much time in the world—in this part of the world creating concerns about Iran. There is big concern about Iran given the fact that Hizballah is destabilizing Lebanon, Hamas is trying to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, and, of course, Iranian action inside of Iraq.

**Iraq/Iran**

**Mr. Engel.** A lot of Iran's empowerment is a result of the war in Iraq. How do you feel—

**The President.** Yes.

**Mr. Engel.** —that Iran is—its position in the world is rising because of your actions in Iraq?

**The President.** See, I'm not so sure I agree with that. That's a premise I don't necessarily agree with. As a matter of fact, I think Iran is troubled by the fact that a young de-

mocracy is growing in Iraq. I—you know, this notion about somehow if Saddam Hussein were in power, everything would be fine in the Middle East is a ludicrous notion. Saddam Hussein was a sponsor of terror. And can you imagine what it'd be like to see an arms race between Saddam Hussein and Ahmadi-nejad, in terms of creating instability in the Middle East? As a matter of fact, the way to ultimately defeat those who use terror to destabilize young democracies is to help the young democracies succeed.

**Progress in Iraq**

**Mr. Engel.** I've watched Iran's influence grow in Iraq. It's been very steady over the years. What are you going to do to try and counteract—

**The President.** Yes.

**Mr. Engel.** —Iran's influence?

**The President.** Well, Basra, for example, is—we stood by the Prime Minister's decision to move into Basra and to—continue to encourage the Prime Minister to go after Shi'a criminals and Shi'a armed militias that are doing harm to the average Iraqi and, at the same time, encourage him to use some of the Iraqi wealth to improve conditions of life. And that's what's happening. Basra is—it's still obviously got work to be done, but it was a successful operation, as you know better than me. He's now heading into Sadr City—he, the Iraqi Government—all aiming to protect innocent people from people who are operating outside the law. And to the extent that those are folks who are supported by Iran, it will serve as a defeat to Iran.

Iraq is changing. You know it better than anybody; you've been spending a lot of time there. And it's in the interest of the United States that we help it continue to change to the better.

**Freedom Agenda/Iran**

**Mr. Engel.** You talked about Iran being a major threat to American policies in the region, with Hamas, Hizballah, militia groups in Iraq. Do you intend to finish your term in office with a military action of some kind against Iran?

**The President.** Richard, that's highly speculative. I've always made it clear that options are on the table. But, you know, the

biggest weapon we have against those who can't stand freedom is the advance of freedom. I'm going to give a speech here in a minute that talks about the need to advance the freedom agenda in the Middle East.

And my—you know, Iran is a threat to people who want to live in peace. That's what they've clearly shown. I mean, the interesting thing in Lebanon is that Hizballah, which had sold itself as a protector against Israel, all of a sudden turned its weapons on the people of Lebanon and all the—the true colors. And sometimes in life there needs to be clarity in order for people to rally to solve a problem.

And so the best way to deal with the Iranians in the Middle East is to help the young democracy of Lebanon survive, is to stand up a Palestinian state—obviously subject to the roadmap—which we intend to do before my Presidency, and succeed in Iraq.

### **Lebanon**

**Mr. Engel.** How are you going to prevent Hizballah from taking over in Lebanon? They had a small coup. The army didn't do anything. And they proved that they are clearly in control of the streets when they want to be.

**The President.** Yes. Well, that's a problem. And obviously one thing to do is to help strengthen the Lebanese Army, which I sent General Dempsey to Beirut—I don't know if he was there when you were there, but he was there precisely to help inventory the Lebanese Army—is to make it clear to Prime Minister Siniora, we stand strongly with you. We'll see what happens out of this agreement and how—whether it sticks or not. But we strongly support the March 14th Coalition.

Perhaps one way to help deal with the situation is to get the U.N. tribunal up and running that's investigating the death of Mr. Hariri. But, you know, no question, it's a tough situation. It's not as if Lebanon has been a stable situation forever either. I mean, this is—and yet the Lebanese people deserve a peaceful democracy, and our aim is to help them.

### **President's Remarks at the Knesset in Jerusalem, Israel**

**Mr. Engel.** It sounded like, when you were addressing the Israeli Knesset, you gave a green light to Israel to take action against Hizballah and Hamas.

**The President.** I don't—Richard, you can read into it what you want to read into it. That certainly wasn't my intention. My intention was to say that all of us need to understand that radical groups are the threat to peace, whether it be Al Qaida or Hamas or Hizballah.

### **Iran**

**Mr. Engel.** Negotiations with Iran—is that appeasement? Is that like—

**The President.** No.

**Mr. Engel.** —appeasing Adolph Hitler?

**The President.** My position, Richard, all along has been that if the Iranians verifiably suspend their enrichment, which will be a key measure to stop them from gaining the know-how to build a weapon, then we—they can come to the table, and the United States will be at the table. That's been a position of my administration for, gosh, I can't remember how many years, but it's a clear position. We've stated it over and over again.

But I've also said that if they choose not to do that—verifiably suspend—we will continue to rally the world to isolate the Iranians. And it is having an effect inside their country. There's a better way forward for the Iranian people than to be isolated, and their leaders just need to make better choices.

### **U.S. Troop Levels in Iraq**

**Mr. Engel.** In Iraq, I recently met a soldier. He was medevaced out on his first tour. He's now back on his second tour—was already medevaced to the green zone. How many more tours do these soldiers have to do? Is there an exit strategy for Iraq?

**The President.** Well, first of all, the fact that this person volunteered again speaks to the great bravery of our troops. And we need to honor them and will honor them. And one way to do so is to have more set tours—in for 12, out for 12.

The other thing is to take care of their families, and when they're veterans, take care of the vets. You know, the fact that you told



me about a guy who got medevaced twice only says to me that we've got a courageous military.

In terms of success, we're returning troops on success. You might remember, I had to make a difficult choice to put more troops in. Those troops are coming home by July. And then, of course, General Petraeus and his successor will assess the situation on the ground, and we will end up having the troops necessary to help the Iraqis succeed.

#### ***U.S Troop Levels in Iraq/Progress in Iraq***

**Mr. Engel.** So it doesn't sound like there's an end anytime soon. It just sounds like we need to support them as much as we can and keep them there for as long as we can.

**The President.** I think the end, Richard, is, I told you, return on success. The more successful Iraq is, the fewer troops we'll need. And there's no question, Iraq is becoming successful. The security situation has changed; the political situation is a lot better; the economic situation—unlike other parts of this world—are pretty strong. And now the question is, are they going to be able to get the resources in an efficient way to the people, so the people see the benefits of democracy? And they're doing a better job of that.

#### ***Progress in Iraq***

**Mr. Engel.** You still view Iraq as a success. Because on the ground, it looks very bleak. People still want to leave the country, and people are——

**The President.** Well, that's interesting you said that. That's a little different from the surveys I've seen and a little different from the attitude of the actual Iraqis I've talked to, but you're entitled to your opinion.

**Mr. Engel.** The Iraqi Government, I think, has one position, which is that it's seeing a lot of progress. But Sadr City has been up in revolt. There's major battles in Mosul. I was just in a major firefight in Sadr City—hit by an EFP. It is still very much a war zone.

**The President.** Richard, no question, it's violent. But there's no question that the Iraqi Government are dealing with the violent people. It's like this attitude about Basra. I can remember, you know, a good reporter

saying, "Basra is a disaster." I'm not suggesting you did, but people said, "It's a disaster." And lo and behold, it wasn't. It was successful.

What you're watching is an Iraqi Government take care of extremists in their midst so that a democracy can survive. And it's essential that this democracy survive for our own security as well as the stability of the Middle East.

#### ***Middle East Peace Process/Lebanon***

**Mr. Engel.** You've talked about having a Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement by the end of this year.

**The President.** Right.

**Mr. Engel.** What gives you hope that that is not overly ambitious? Why do you think that's possible?

**The President.** Because, first of all, people in Israel understand that in order for them to have long-term security, there has to be a democratic state. People in Palestine want a democratic state. Now, there are people opposing that— Hamas, in particular—trying to create the violence and fear to stop the state from progressing.

Secondly, I know their leaders. I spent a lot of time with Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. They are dedicated to doing the hard work.

And thirdly, I've seen the progress being made on issues like——

**Mr. Engel.** What about Hamas? Hamas was elected——

**The President.** Excuse me for a minute, please—on issues like the border and refugees and security. And, yes, Hamas was elected, and they've done a disaster in—of running Gaza. And there will be an interesting contrast between the vision of Hamas and their record and the vision of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad and the Palestinian state. And it's that vision, the competing visions that will be put forth to the Palestinian people at some time.

And I believe a state will exist, and I know it's necessary for peace in the Middle East. And I think—I feel good that we can get it defined during my Presidency and implemented subject to roadmap.

**Freedom Agenda/Al Qaida**

**Mr. Engel.** Going back to your vision and the message you've been pushing about democracy and supporting moderates across the region, if you look back over the last several years, the Middle East that you'll be handing over to the next President has—is deeply problematic. You have Hamas in power, Hizballah empowered, taking to the streets, more—stronger than the Government, Iran empowered, Iraq still at war. What region—

**The President.** Richard.

**Mr. Engel.** —are you handing over?

**The President.** Richard, those folks were always around; they were here. What we're handing over is a Middle East that, one, recognizes the problems—and the world recognizes them. There's clarity as to what the problems are. To say all of a sudden that Hamas showed up is just not factual. They have been around, and they have been dangerous. Hizballah has been around, and they are dangerous. They have been—that's why we put them on the terrorist list before my Presidency.

And what you're beginning to see is new democracies. You'll see a Palestinian state. You'll see a—Iraq emerging. And it doesn't happen overnight. The freedom movement is not a instant. The freedom movement is a challenge to a system that said, the status quo is acceptable, when underneath was brewing all kinds of resentments.

We've taken on Al Qaida in the Middle East. It was from here that they recruited people to launch attacks. And while they're still existing, they've been hurt. And they're going to be hurt even more as liberty advances and freedom advances.

**Al Qaida/Iran**

**Mr. Engel.** Do you believe that Iran is now more of a threat in Iraq than Al Qaida?

**The President.** You know, that's an interesting question. I believe—yes, I bet—I think they're both been seriously hurt in Iraq. And you know, Al Qaida thought they were going to have a stronghold in Anbar Province. They proudly proclaimed this was going to be their capital from which they were going to launch missions around the world and throughout the region, and they failed.

And in Iran [Iraq] \*, Shi'a groups funded by Iran have tried to take on the Government. And the Government is succeeding, and it's—but it's going to take awhile.

**War on Terror/Freedom Agenda**

**Mr. Engel.** The war on terrorism has been the centerpiece of your Presidency. Many people say that it has not made the world safer, that it has created more radicals, that there are more people in this part of the world who want to attack the United States.

**The President.** Yes. That theory says, by confronting the people that killed us, therefore, there's going to be more; therefore, we shouldn't confront them.

**Mr. Engel.** Or creating more people who want to kill us, one could also say.

**The President.** Well, you can say that, but the truth of the matter is, there's fewer Al Qaida leaders; the people are on the run; they're having more trouble recruiting in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, our partner, has gone after Al Qaida. People now see Al Qaida for what it is, which is a group of extremists and radicals who preach nothing but hate. And no, I just—it's just the beehive theory. We should have just let the beehive sit there and hope the bees don't come out of the hive.

My attitude is, the United States must stay on the offense against Al Qaida—two ways. One from—

**Mr. Engel.** But haven't you just smashed the bees—

**The President.** —two ways—

**Mr. Engel.** —in the hive and let them spread?

**The President.** Excuse me for a minute, Richard—two ways: One, find them and bring them to justice—what we're doing; and two, offer freedom as an alternative to their vision. And somehow to suggest that bees would stay in the hive is naive. They didn't stay in the hive when they came and killed 3,000 of our citizens.

**Mr. Engel.** Thank you very much for your time, Mr. President.

**The President.** Yes, sir. Yes.

**Mr. Engel.** Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:02 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh for later

\* White House correction.

broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Lt. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, USA, acting commander, U.S. Central Command; Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 19.

### **Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr.**

*May 19, 2008*

Secretary Paulson, thanks for coming. And I just got back from the Middle East, and the Secretary came over to talk about the economy and how he sees it. And we're working through tough times, and I appreciate the leadership you're providing.

He did assure me that the refund checks are heading out; people are getting that money. And that's good. It should help our economy and, more importantly, help people pay their bills. And we hope people use that money and take care of their families and shop.

I also asked him how he was doing in helping people stay in their homes. We spent time talking about the housing industry. And one of the really impressive programs has been the HOPE NOW program. Secretary Paulson has taken the lead in—to help people refinance and help people get the financial help necessary to stay in homes. And that help comes in all different kinds of ways, but generally, it just means that the lending institutions are—help a creditworthy person stay in their home, and that's what we want to have happen.

Since the program started, 1.4 million people got mortgage relief so they can stay in their homes. And in the first quarter of this year, 500,000 households, 500,000 families were helped.

And I appreciate your leadership on that, Hank. It's been—our policy in this administration is, we—laws shouldn't bail out lenders; laws shouldn't help speculators; the Gov-

ernment ought to be helping creditworthy people stay in their homes. And one way we can do that—and Congress is making progress on this—is the reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. That reform will come with a strong, independent regulator.

The Secretary is briefing me on the progress being made on the Hill on this very important subject. Our fellow citizens have got to know that these major players in the mortgage markets, if reformed properly by Congress, will really help stabilize the markets and make it easier for people to stay in their homes.

And we look forward to working with Congress to get a good piece of legislation to my desk that helps our fellow citizens and helps us get through this housing issue.

So, Mr. Secretary, thank you for your briefing. I appreciate very much your leadership on the issue.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

### **Remarks on the Earthquake in China**

*May 20, 2008*

Laura and I have come to the Chinese Embassy. Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much. Madam, thank you very much. We've come to express our country's condolences for those who mourn for the loved ones.

We stand ready to help in any way that the Chinese Government would like. We know there's great courage being displayed, Mr. Ambassador, as rescue workers search for those who may still be living.

This natural disaster is very hard on many of your people, and we understand that. And we extend our deepest sympathies and pray for recovery and pray for the strength of those who are—whose lives have been torn apart during this terrible tragedy.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. at the Embassy of China. In his remarks, he referred to China's Ambassador to the U.S. Zhou Wenzhong and his wife, Xie Shumin.

**Statement on Senator Edward M. Kennedy**

*May 20, 2008*

Laura and I are concerned to learn of our friend Senator Kennedy's diagnosis. Ted Kennedy is a man of tremendous courage, remarkable strength, and powerful spirit. Our thoughts are with Senator Kennedy and his family during this difficult period. We join our fellow Americans in praying for his full recovery.

**Statement on Senate Confirmation of G. Steven Agee as United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit**

*May 20, 2008*

Today Members of the Senate voted unanimously to confirm Justice Steven Agee to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. I appreciate their work on his nomination. Justice Agee is a man of integrity who is respected for his sound legal judgment and commitment to equal justice for all Americans. His work on the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Virginia Court of Appeals demonstrates that his rulings are based on the letter of the law. I am confident that he will serve on the fourth circuit with the same level of dedication and professionalism.

After I nominated Justice Agee on March 13, 2008, he received a hearing and a confirmation vote in less than 3 months. Unfortunately, many of my other judicial nominees have not received a timely confirmation process, and their nominations have been pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee for significantly longer.

Since the beginning of the 110th Congress, the Senate has only confirmed eight circuit court nominees. In the last 2 years of the past 3 administrations, the Senate has confirmed an average of 17 circuit court judges. I encourage the Senate to provide all judicial nominees with a swift and fair confirmation process.

**Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Stabilization of Iraq**

*May 20, 2008*

On May 22, 2003, by Executive Order 13303, I declared a national emergency protecting the Development Fund for Iraq and certain other property in which Iraq has an interest, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) (IEEPA). I took this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq.

In Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, I modified the scope of the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 and amended the steps taken pursuant to it.

Because the obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on May 22, 2003, and the measures adopted on that date, August 28, 2003, July 29, 2004, November 29, 2004, and July 17, 2007, to deal with that emergency must continue in effect beyond May 22, 2008. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
May 20, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:06 a.m., May 20, 2008]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on May 21.

**Message to the Congress on  
Continuation of the National  
Emergency With Respect to the  
Stabilization of Iraq**

*May 20, 2008*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication. This notice states that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2008.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to this threat and maintain in force the measures taken in response to this threat.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
May 20, 2008.

**Proclamation 8258—A Day of  
Solidarity With the Cuban People,  
2008**

*May 20, 2008*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

**A Proclamation**

Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of worship are among the liberties that Americans cherish. Our Nation fully supports the brave people who work to secure these liberties in the countries where they are denied. And on this Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People, we focus our attention on the men and women working to secure freedom, democracy, and human rights for the citizens of Cuba.

For half a century, the Cuban people have suffered under oppressive dictatorship. Under the rule of Fidel and Raul Castro, Cubans have seen their political freedoms denied, their economy reduced to shambles, and their families torn apart. The Cuban people deserve better—and the American people stand with them as they work to achieve it.

The United States is rallying the free world to the cause of Cuban liberty. We continue to shine a bright light on the Castro regime's abuses—and America calls on the Government of Cuba to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience.

We keep these prisoners, their families, and all Cubans in our prayers. Especially on this Day of Solidarity, we ask the Almighty to comfort and strengthen those who suffer under the Castro dictatorship—and to hasten the day when Cuba's suffering comes to an end.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 21, 2008, as A Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People to recognize those who are suffering in Cuba, especially Cuba's prisoners of conscience. I call upon the citizens of the United States to mark this observance with appropriate ceremonies and activities that demonstrate

America's resolute support for those living under the Castro regime.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 22, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on May 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

## Remarks on the Situation in Cuba

May 21, 2008

Thank you all. *Bienvenidos*. Thanks for coming to mark this Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People. This is a day of pride, as we honor the culture and history of a noble nation. It's a day of sorrow, as we reflect on the continued oppression of the Cuban people. Most of all, this is a day of hope. We have hope because we see a day coming when Cubans will have the freedom of which they have dreamed for centuries, the freedom that is the eternal birthright of all mankind. And many of you here are working to hasten that day, and I thank you for your efforts.

I particularly thank the members of my Cabinet who've joined us. Madam Secretary, thank you for coming and being a staunch friend of the Cuban people. *Mi amigo* Carlos Gutierrez *y su familia*—for those of you in Cuba who are listening to this broadcast, I think it is important for you to know that Carlos is a Cuban American. He's now in the Cabinet of the President of the United States. All things are possible in a free society. Secretary Kempthorne, Secretary Chao, and Secretary Leavitt, thank you all for coming as well. I appreciate Acting Secretary Bernardi of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I'm particularly thankful for Members of the United States Congress—Mel Martinez—all things are possible in a free society; Ileana Ros-Lehtinen; *los hermanos* Balart, Lincoln Diaz-Balart *y tambien* Mario Diaz-

Balart. Thank you for coming, Congressman Chris Smith, Congressman Darrell Issa, Congressman John Campbell, Congressman Gus Bilirakis, thank you all for coming. Appreciate you all coming.

I appreciate the members of the diplomatic corps who've joined us. Thank you for being such good friends of the Cuban people. I want to thank the family members of the Cuban dissidents who are here. Welcome to the White House. Thank you for coming. *Y por fin*, Willy Chirino and his wife, Lisette Alvarez, thank you all for coming.

This time of year holds great significance for the Cuban people. One hundred and thirteen years ago this week, Cuba lost its great poet and patriot Jose Marti. And 106 years ago this week, Cuba achieved the independence for which Marti gave his life. Jose Marti knew that true liberty would come to Cuba only with a just government of its people's choosing. He warned: "A regime of personal despotism would even be more shameful and more calamitous than the political despotism [Cuba] now endures."

Marti's warning proved truer than anyone could have imagined. Today, after nearly a half-century of repression, Cuba still suffers under the personal despotism of Fidel and Raul Castro. On the dictators' watch, Cuba's political freedoms have been denied. Families have been torn apart. The island's economy has been reduced to shambles. Cuba's culture has been drained of artists and scholars and musicians and athletes. And like the once grand buildings of Havana, Cuba's society is crumbling after decades of neglect under the Castros.

A few months ago, when Fidel handed over many of his titles to his brother Raul, the Cuban regime announced a series of so-called reforms. For example, Cubans are now allowed to purchase mobile phones and DVD players and computers. And they've been told that they will be able to purchase toasters and other basic appliances in 2010.

If the Cuban regime is serious about improving life for the Cuban people, it will take steps necessary to make these changes meaningful. Now that the Cuban people can be trusted with mobile phones, they should be trusted to speak freely in public. Now that the Cuban people are allowed to purchase DVD players, they should also be allowed

to watch movies and documentaries produced by Cuban artists who are free to express themselves. Now that the Cuban people have open access to computers, they should also have open access to the Internet. And now that the Cuban people will be allowed to have toasters in 2 years, they should stop needing to worry about whether they will have bread today.

There is another problem with the regime's recent announcements. It is the height of hypocrisy to come—claim credit for permitting Cubans to own products that virtually none of them can afford. For the regime's actions to have any impact, they must be accompanied by major economic reforms that open up Cubans' inefficient state-run markets to give families real choices about what they buy and institute a free enterprise system that allows ordinary people to benefit from their talents and their hard work. Only when Cubans have an economy that makes prosperity possible will these announcements lead to any real improvements in their daily lives.

Real change in Cuba also requires political freedom. In this area too, the regime has made grand commitments. One of Raul's first acts after receiving his new titles was to sign a major United Nations treaty on human rights. Yet when it comes to respecting human rights on the island, the regime has not attempted even cosmetic changes. For example, political dissidents continue to be harassed, detained, and beaten, and more than 200 prisoners of conscience still languish in Castro's tropical gulag.

Recently, I received a letter from a man who spent 17 years in these dungeons. He described them as "dens of torture and pain and death." This is an undeniable violation of the U.N. treaty that Cuba just signed. If the regime views this document as anything more than a worthless piece of paper, it must immediately stop its abuse of political dissidents and release all political prisoners.

The world is watching the Cuban regime. If it follows its recent public gestures by opening up access to information and implementing meaningful economic reforms, respecting political freedom and human rights, then it can credibly say it has delivered the beginnings of change. But experience tells

us this regime has no intention of taking these steps. Instead, its recent gestures appear to be nothing more than a cruel joke perpetuated on a long-suffering people.

America refuses to be deceived, and so do the Cuban people. While the regime embarrasses and isolates itself, the Cuban people will continue to act with dignity and honor and courage. In Cuba, advocates of liberty use this week to honor political prisoners who have sacrificed for the cause of freedom, like the brave writer named Pedro Luis Boitel. On May 17th, 1972, while on a hunger strike in prison, Boitel said: "They can kill and destroy my body, but never my spirit. This can never bend." Eight days later, Boitel died. He was 41 years old.

We see the same unbending courage in Cuba's political prisoners today. We see it in a man named Luis Enrique Ferrer Garcia. Luis Enrique is a peaceful prodemocracy advocate who was rounded up during the 2003 Black Spring. Luis Enrique received the longest sentence of all those arrested during the crackdown, condemned to 28 years in Castro's prisons. At times, this brave man has been trapped in a dark cell too small for him to stand. He suffers from high blood pressure and severe gastrointestinal illnesses. As his health obviously deteriorates, he has little access to his family.

We see this courage in a doctor named Oscar Elias Biscet. Dr. Biscet is a healer, a man of peace, and a determined activist for human rights. For all this, Dr. Biscet serves a 25-year sentence under the worst conditions. He was once put into solitary confinement for nearly 8 months, trapped in a small, dark, underground cell. He lost nearly 50 pounds and has lost almost all his teeth. He is in poor health. He is allowed very few visitors.

We see this courage in Cuba's *Damas de Blanco*. Every Sunday, these ladies in white march in silent and peaceful protest demanding the release of their loved ones. A few weeks ago, when about a dozen of these women held a peaceful sit-in at a public park, they were dragged from the area by a large pro-regime mob. One of the women was Berta Soler, whose husband, Juan Angel Moya Acosta, is serving a 20-year sentence. Earlier this month, Berta told me personally:

"Despite the torture, Cuba's political prisoners will not give in."

Recently, a former political prisoner asked me to remember his brothers languishing in Castro's jails. Through this Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People, we honor that request by speaking the names of Cuba's prisoners of conscience. They include men I have just mentioned. They include others, such as Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso, Jose Luis Garcia Paneque, Normando Hernandez, Jorge Luis Gonzalez Tanquero, and Ariel y Guido Sigler Amaya. They include other names that many of you keep in your hearts and in your prayers.

These names are being whispered in Cuban cities from Pinar del Rio to Santiago de Cuba. These names are being echoed at Solidarity events across the world, as people from South America to Eastern Europe demand the release of all Cuban prisoners—political prisoners. Today these names are being recognized by the nation that will always be a friend of Cuban freedom, *los Estados Unidos*.

This is the first Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People, and the United States must keep observing such days until Cuba's freedom. We will continue to support the Cubans who work to make their nation democratic and prosperous and just. Since 2001, the United States has dramatically stepped up our efforts to promote freedom and democracy in Cuba. This includes our increased efforts to get uncensored information to the Cuban people, primarily through Radio y TV Marti.

Today I also repeat my offer to license U.S. NGOs and faith-based groups to provide computers and Internet to the Cuban people, if Cuban rulers will end their restrictions on Internet access. And since Raul is allowing Cubans to own mobile phones for the first time, we're going to change our regulations to allow Americans to send mobile phones to family members in Cuba. If Raul is serious about his so-called reforms, he will allow these phones to reach the Cuban people.

Through these measures, the United States is reaching out to the Cuban people.

Yet we know that life will not fundamentally change for Cubans until their form of government changes. For those who've suffered for decades, such change may seem impossible. But the truth is, it is inevitable.

The day will come when Cubans freely receive information from many sources. The day will come when popular blogs are no longer blocked and broadcasts from the United States are no longer jammed. The day will come when Cuban leaders live up to the international human right documents they have signed, instead of making a mockery of them. The day will come when Cubans can speak their dissent and change their jobs and leave their country and return to it. And the day will come when they can worship the God Almighty without fear. The day will come when all political prisoners are offered unconditional release. And these developments will bring another great day, the day when Cubans choose their own leaders by voting in free and fair elections.

Today, 113 years after Jose Marti left us, a new post-patriot expresses the hopes of the Cuban people. With us this morning is songwriter Willy Chirino. Willy will perform a song that is on the Cuban people's lips and in their hearts. And here are some of the lyrics: *Nuestro dia ya viene llegando*.

As I mentioned, today my words are being broadcast directly to the Cuban people. I say to all those listening on the island today, your day is coming. As surely as the waves beat against the Malecon, the tide of freedom will reach Cuba's shores. Until it does, know that you are in our prayers. And know that the Author of Liberty hears those prayers, *y que, con su ayuda, veremos a Cuba libre. Gracias, y que Dios los bendiga*.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Fidel Castro Ruz and President Raul Castro Ruz of Cuba; and former Cuban political prisoners Jorge Luis Garcia Perez and Miguel Sigler Amaya. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.



### **Remarks on Signing the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008**

*May 21, 2008*

I want to thank the Members of Congress who've joined us as I sign the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. It's a piece of legislation which prohibits health insurers and employers from discriminating on the basis of genetic information. In other words, it protects our citizens from having genetic information misused. And this bill does so without undermining the basic premise of the insurance industry.

I also want to pay homage today to—and not only to Members of the Congress who are behind me but also to Senator Ted Kennedy, who has worked for over a decade to get this piece of legislation to a President's desk. All of us are so pleased that Senator Kennedy has gone home, and our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.

Now it's my honor to sign the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

*[At this point, the President signed the bill.]*

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 493, approved May 21, was assigned Public Law No. 110–233.

### **Statement on the Death of Hamilton Jordan**

*May 21, 2008*

Laura and I are saddened by the death of Hamilton Jordan. Hamilton Jordan was a man whose love for American politics and his country took him at a young age from the State capitol in Georgia to the White House. As President Carter's close adviser, Hamilton played an important role in shaping our Nation's policies. We value his service to our country.

Hamilton Jordan was also a great community leader, using lessons learned during his personal struggle against cancer to encourage other cancer survivors to remain optimistic and embrace the blessings of each day. Through their work with Camp Sunshine, he

and his wife, Dorothy, have helped thousands of children enjoy life as they cope with the challenges of cancer.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Jordan family.

### **Proclamation 8259—National Maritime Day, 2008**

*May 21, 2008*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

On National Maritime Day, America honors our highly skilled mariners who sail the high seas, support those on the front lines of the war on terror, and promote commerce around the world.

Since 1775, the United States Merchant Marine has served our country, helping America become a great maritime power. During the Second World War, courageous mariners were among those who suffered greatly—hundreds of ships were lost to enemy action, and many mariners made the ultimate sacrifice. We pay tribute to these heroes who answered the call to serve when our Nation needed them most. Today, our merchant mariners continue to protect our homeland, including by supporting our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In times of peace and war, these brave patriots help keep our Nation safe and strengthen our economy. By transporting American goods across the oceans, merchant mariners facilitate commerce and advance trade. These Americans honor the noble traditions of seafarers and enrich our country's maritime heritage.

In recognition of the importance of the U.S. Merchant Marine, the Congress, by joint resolution approved on May 20, 1933, as amended, has designated May 22 of each year as "National Maritime Day," and has authorized and requested that the President issue an annual proclamation calling for its appropriate observance.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2008, as National Maritime Day. I call upon the people

of the United States to mark this observance by honoring the service of merchant mariners and by displaying the flag of the United States at their homes and in their communities. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 23, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 27.

**Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008”**

*May 21, 2008*

*To the House of Representatives:*

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2419, the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.”

For a year and a half, I have consistently asked that the Congress pass a good farm bill that I can sign. Regrettably, the Congress has failed to do so. At a time of high food prices and record farm income, this bill lacks program reform and fiscal discipline. It continues subsidies for the wealthy and increases farm bill spending by more than \$20 billion, while using budget gimmicks to hide much of the increase. It is inconsistent with our objectives in international trade negotiations, which include securing greater market access for American farmers and ranchers. It would needlessly expand the size and scope of government. Americans sent us to Washington to achieve results and be good stewards of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars. This bill violates that fundamental commitment.

In January 2007, my Administration put forward a fiscally responsible farm bill proposal that would improve the safety net for farmers and move current programs toward more market-oriented policies. The bill be-

fore me today fails to achieve these important goals.

At a time when net farm income is projected to increase by more than \$28 billion in 1 year, the American taxpayer should not be forced to subsidize that group of farmers who have adjusted gross incomes of up to \$1.5 million. When commodity prices are at record highs, it is irresponsible to increase government subsidy rates for 15 crops, subsidize additional crops, and provide payments that further distort markets. Instead of better targeting farm programs, this bill eliminates the existing payment limit on marketing loan subsidies.

Now is also not the time to create a new uncapped revenue guarantee that could cost billions of dollars more than advertised. This is on top of a farm bill that is anticipated to cost more than \$600 billion over 10 years. In addition, this bill would force many businesses to prepay their taxes in order to finance the additional spending.

This legislation is also filled with earmarks and other ill-considered provisions. Most notably, H.R. 2419 provides: \$175 million to address water issues for desert lakes; \$250 million for a 400,000-acre land purchase from a private owner; funding and authority for the noncompetitive sale of National Forest land to a ski resort; and \$382 million earmarked for a specific watershed. These earmarks, and the expansion of Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage requirements, have no place in the farm bill. Rural and urban Americans alike are frustrated with excessive government spending and the funneling of taxpayer funds for pet projects. This bill will only add to that frustration.

The bill also contains a wide range of other objectionable provisions, including one that restricts our ability to redirect food aid dollars for emergency use at a time of great need globally. The bill does not include the requested authority to buy food in the developing world to save lives. Additionally, provisions in the bill raise serious constitutional concerns. For all the reasons outlined above, I must veto H.R. 2419, and I urge the Congress to extend current law for a year or more.

I veto this bill fully aware that it is rare for a stand-alone farm bill not to receive the

President's signature, but my action today is not without precedent. In 1956, President Eisenhower stood firmly on principle, citing high crop subsidies and too much government control of farm programs among the reasons for his veto. President Eisenhower wrote in his veto message, "Bad as some provisions of this bill are, I would have signed it if in total it could be interpreted as sound and good for farmers and the nation." For similar reasons, I am vetoing the bill before me today.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
May 21, 2008.

**Remarks at a Division Review  
Ceremony at Fort Bragg, North  
Carolina**

*May 22, 2008*

**The President.** I want to thank you for the warm welcome to Fort Bragg. It is good to be at the home of the Airborne and Special Operation Forces. This is my fourth visit to Fort Bragg since I have been honored to be the President. Somehow I always find my way back to the "center of the universe." And every time I come, I look forward to saying, "Hooah!"

**Audience members.** Hooah!

**The President.** I'm pleased to be with the paratroopers of the all-American 82d Airborne Division. You know, you and my dad have something in common: You both enjoy jumping out of airplanes. [Laughter] He's jumped with the Golden Knights at Fort Bragg six times. Dad is America's only sky-diving President, and that's a distinction he's going to keep as far as I'm concerned. [Laughter] Speaking of which, he has a message for all of you—of those of you jumping tomorrow: "Airborne, all the way!"

This is the first time since 2006 that five brigades from your division have assembled together. Most of you recently returned from extended 15-month deployments to the frontlines in Afghanistan and Iraq. We've asked a lot of you. You've achieved difficult objectives in a new kind of war. You've per-

formed with skill and valor. And on behalf of a grateful nation, welcome home.

I thank General Dave Rodriguez for his service to our country. I thank Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army, for joining us today. I appreciate Brigadier General Art Bartell, Colonel Victor Petrenko. I want to thank Sergeant Major Tom Capel.

I'm honored to be here with the military families. I particularly want to say hello to Maureen McNeill, wife of General Dan McNeill. I know he'll be pleased that I recognized you here at this event when I see him. [Laughter]

I want to thank all the families of the paratroopers from the 82d Airborne Division who are here today. I welcome the families of the fallen heroes here today. It's such an honor to see the veterans of the 82d Airborne Division and other veterans who have joined us today.

I want them—to pay a special tribute to the wounded warriors from the 82d Airborne. Thank you for your courage.

I welcome the State and local elected officials and members of the Fort Bragg community. Thank you for supporting these troops.

Looking out on the units this morning, I see why the 82d Airborne is known as America's Guard of Honor. In your ranks, I see the strength of the greatest military the world has ever known. And in the families of Fort Bragg, I see the love and support that makes your service possible. The United States of America owes our troops in uniform a debt of gratitude, and we owe our military families the strong support necessary to make sure that they understand that we appreciate their sacrifices.

Every trooper in the 82d is a triple volunteer. You volunteered to join the Army; you volunteered to attend jump school; and you volunteered to undertake some of our military's most difficult missions by joining this elite division. Each of you is proud to wear the all-American patch of the 82d. And I am incredibly proud to be the Commander in Chief of such noble, courageous men and women.

As members of the 82d Airborne Division, you belong to a storied military tradition. When Allied forces landed in Normandy, their—paratroopers of the 82d were among

the first boots on the ground. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, this division was among the first units to deploy to Operation Desert Shield. When our Nation announced that the 82d Airborne was flying toward Haiti in 1994, the country's oppressive leader began to make plans to fly out. Across the world, the 82d has come to represent the vanguard of freedom. And we salute all the brave veterans with us today who have ever marched in your ranks.

At the beginning of a new century, the men and women of the 82d Airborne have once again stepped forward to advance the cause of liberty. Since the attacks of 9/11, you have deployed on more missions than any other division in the United States Army. You've taken the battle to the terrorists abroad so we do not have to face them here at home. And you've shown the enemies of freedom that the 82d Airborne will never give any ground and will always fight all the way.

From the frontlines in Afghanistan, we welcome home the 4th Brigade Combat Team, which brought "Fury from the Skies" to America's enemies. We welcome home units of the Combat Aviation Brigade, which flew on "Pegasus Wings." We welcome home your Division Headquarters, your Special Troops Battalion, your commander, Major General Dave Rodriguez—"all-American Six."

During your deployment in Afghanistan, you served under NATO commander and longtime Fort Bragg resident General Dan McNeill. Under his leadership, and because of your courage, you took the fight to the enemy. And thanks to you, the Taliban no longer controls the Sangin Valley. And thanks to you, the Taliban's stronghold in the town of Musa Qala has fallen and a flag of a free Afghanistan has risen. Thanks to you, hundreds of insurgents have been captured in eastern Afghanistan; many others have been killed. And thanks to you, a nation where Al Qaida once plotted the attacks of 9/11 is now a democracy and an ally in the war against these extremists.

From the frontlines in Iraq, we welcome home the "Falcons" of the 2d Brigade, the "Panthers" of the 3d Brigade, the "Pro-

viders" of the 82d Sustainment Brigade, and units of the Combat Aviation Brigade.

When Operation Iraqi Freedom began, members of the 82d Airborne helped remove Saddam Hussein from power. The decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision at the time, and it remains the right decision today.

With Saddam gone, our job was to help the Iraqi people defend themselves against the extremists and to build a free society. In 2006, that mission was faltering. I knew a victory was essential to our security, so we implemented a new strategy. Instead of retreating, we sent in more troops. And the first troops in as part of that surge were the troops of the Falcon Brigade of the 82d Airborne. Together with the Panther Brigade and other units of the 82d Airborne, you pursued the enemy in its strongholds, you denied the terrorists sanctuary, you brought security to neighborhoods that had been in the grip of terror. And across Iraq, violence is down, civilian deaths are down, sectarian killings are down, and attacks on American forces are down. You did the job we sent you to do. You have returned home on success. And all of America is proud of the 82d Airborne.

When I was looking for a commander to lead the surge, I turned to a former commander in the 82d Airborne, General David Petraeus. He's done a brilliant job leading our troops in Iraq. And when it came time to name a new leader for Central Command, he was my first and only choice. The United States Senate must give him a fair hearing, and they must confirm him as quickly as possible.

General Petraeus has reported that security conditions have improved enough in Iraq to return by the end of July to the pre-surge level of 15 combat brigade teams. So far, three brigades, including the Falcon Brigade, have redeployed without replacement as part of this drawdown. Two more brigades will follow in the months ahead. When we complete this drawdown, we will have reduced our combat brigades in Iraq by 25 percent from the year before. General Petraeus and our commanders will continue to analyze the situation on the ground and report back to me with their recommendations for future

troop levels. But my message to our commanders is this: You will have all the troops, you will have all the resources you need to win in Iraq.

Often I've been asked, what will success look like in Iraq? So I want to share some thoughts with you. Success will be when Al Qaida has no safe haven in Iraq, and Iraqis can protect themselves. Success will be when Iraq is a nation that can support itself economically. Success will be when Iraq is a democracy that governs itself effectively and responds to the will of its people. Success will be when Iraq is a strong and capable ally in the war on terror. And when our country succeeds in Iraq, generations of Americans will be more secure.

The first condition for success in Iraq is a country that can protect its own people. Paratroopers gathered here have seen the Iraqis in action. They're brave people. They're courageous people. And with our training, they're becoming better soldiers. They're assuming greater responsibility for fighting the terrorists and policing the streets and defending their territory. And as a sign of their commitment to this mission, the Government in Baghdad launched a surge of 100,000 new troops.

In Mosul and other areas in northern Iraq, Iraqi forces have launched operations to drive Al Qaida from one of its few remaining major strongholds in the country. In Basra and Sadr City, Iraqi forces have led operations to clear out Iranian-backed special groups, illegal militias, and criminal gangs. The capability of the Iraqi security force is improving. They're winning battles.

In this fight, they have been joined by about 100,000 Iraqis who belong to citizens groups bearing the proud name of Sons of Iraq. Many of these groups are Sunni; some are Shi'a; some are mixed. But whatever their makeup, these groups are determined to expel the enemies of freedom and secure their communities and build a more hopeful future.

The enemies of free Iraq are determined to deny that future, and that means we can expect more violence. We can also expect the Iraqi security forces to be better equipped, better trained, and better able to take the

fight to the enemy. And as they do, they can count on the United States of America.

The second condition for success in Iraq is a country that can support itself economically. Iraq's economy has made tremendous strides since the beginning of the surge. Inflation is declining. Economic growth is increasing. Investment in the energy and telecom industries is increasing. Energy production is on the rise. Listen, there are many challenges that remain, and there is work to be done to overcome decades of oppression and mismanagement. Yet Iraqis can take pride in the economic progress their country has made.

And they can take pride in the fact that they're paying a greater share of their own expenses. The—we provided critical help to Iraq early on. And now that the economy expands, the Government in Baghdad has a solemn responsibility to invest in its people, pay for its infrastructure, and pay for its own security.

The third condition for success in Iraq is a democracy that governs itself effectively and responds to the will of its people. Security has improved, and Iraqis have realized they don't have to rely on militias or other extremists for protection. And they're taking a growing interest in their country's political future.

In local communities, Iraqis are increasingly demanding reconciliation. They're demanding a better life for their families. In the Provinces, the tribes that rose up to cast off Al Qaida now look forward to casting votes and rebuilding their neighborhoods.

And in Baghdad, the Government is responding to these developments with an impressive string of legislative achievements. They passed a pension law, de-Ba'athification reform, a new budget, an amnesty law, and Provincial powers law. And while there's still a distance to travel, they have come a long way. Their legislative accomplishments would be notable in any country, but they're even more impressive considering the conditions the Iraqis have had to overcome.

As we look ahead, we cannot expect Iraq to suddenly put aside all their political differences. Sometimes we have a few of our own in the United States. We can't expect them to reach agreement on every issue. But

we can expect Iraqis of all backgrounds to take an increasingly active role in the democratic process, share power, and settle disputes by debating in the halls of government rather than fighting in the streets.

The fourth condition of success in Iraq is a country that is an ally in the war on terror. The people of Iraq have seen the dark vision the enemy offers. They've rejected it. The Iraqis understand firsthand how the terrorists murder and maim with no respect for innocent life. It is no coincidence that a nation that has suffered mightily at the hands of terror is becoming a strong ally in the war against the terrorists.

And now the leaders of Iraq want to solidify their country's relationship with the United States. Last year, America and Iraq agreed to sign a long-term strategic partnership. This partnership would support future cooperation between our countries, without establishing permanent bases or without binding a future President to specific troop levels. Part of this agreement would provide legal protection for American troops in Iraq similar to those in other countries where our forces are deployed. And it would show our friends across the world that America will stand with them as they stand against terror.

The vision for success in Iraq that I just outlined will not come easily. There will be tough fighting ahead. But the progress is undeniable. Because of your bravery and your courage, the terrorists and extremists are on the run, and we are on our way to victory.

I know there have been some disagreements on the war on terror. But whenever—whatever—wherever Members of Congress stood on the decision of—to remove Saddam Hussein, we should be able to agree that our troops deserve America's full support. And that means the United States Congress needs to pass a responsible war funding bill that does not tie the hands of our commanders and gives our troops everything they need to complete and accomplish the mission.

Some of our fellow citizens wonder whether the mission in Iraq is worth the cost. I strongly believe it is. And here is why. The enemy has made clear that Iraq is the central battleground of the great ideological struggle of our time. This is a struggle between those who murder the innocent to advance their

hateful objectives and those of us who love liberty and long for peace. We saw that these enemies—what these enemies intend for our country on September the 11th, 2001, and we must do everything in our power to stop the enemy from attacking us again.

Withdrawal from Iraq before we have achieved success would embolden Al Qaida and give them new safe havens from which to plot attacks on the American homeland. Withdrawal before success would embolden Iran in its nuclear weapons ambitions and its efforts to dominate the region. Withdrawal before success would send a signal to terrorists and extremists across the world that America is weak and does not have the stomach for a long fight. Withdrawal before success would be catastrophic for our country. It would more likely—be more likely that we would suffer another attack like the one we experienced on September the 11th. It would jeopardize the safety of future generations. And we must not, and we will not, allow that to happen.

By contrast, success in Iraq would deny Al Qaida a safe haven and hand Usama bin Laden a strategic defeat in the land where his terrorist movement has chosen to make a stand. Success in Iraq would deal a devastating blow to Iran's ambitions to dominate the region. Success in Iraq would show the people of the Middle East that democracy and freedom can flourish in their midst. And success in Iraq would send a signal to the world that America does not withdraw, does not retreat, does not back down in the face of terror. And that will make us safer here in the United States of America.

America is fortunate to have courageous men and women who volunteer to protect us during these dangerous time. We've seen that courage in the story of Sergeant First Class Benjamin Sebban of the 82d Airborne. As a senior medic in his squadron, Ben made sacrifice a way of life. When younger medics were learning how to insert IVs, he would always offer up his own arm for practice. And when the time came, Ben did not hesitate to offer his fellow soldiers far more.

On March 17th, 2007, in Diyala Province, Ben saw a truck filled with explosives racing toward his team of paratroopers. He ran out in the field to warn them, exposing himself

to a blast. Ben received severe wounds, but this good medic never bothered to check his own injuries. Instead, he devoted his final moments on Earth to treating others. This morning, it was such a great honor to be able to present Ben's mom the Silver Star.

We pray that a loving God comforts his family. We pray that a loving God comforts the families of all the fallen. We will always honor their memory. And we pledge that their sacrifice shall not be in vain.

Our mission in Iraq has been long and trying. But when the history books are written, they will show that this generation of heroes was as great as any in the history of our Nation. They will show that America refused to shrink in the face of terror. They will show that freedom prevailed.

Thank you for who you are. Thank you for what you do. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, you are America's Guard of Honor. May God bless you, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez, USA, commander, Col. Victor Petrenko, USA, chief of staff, and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel, USA, 82d Airborne Division; Brig. Gen. Arthur M. Bartell, USA, deputy commanding general, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg; Gen. Dan K. McNeill, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; former leader Raoul Cedras of Haiti; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Barbara Filik Walsh, mother of SFC Benjamin L. Sebban, USA.

### **Proclamation 8260—Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2008**

*May 22, 2008*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

On Memorial Day, we honor the heroes who have laid down their lives in the cause of freedom, resolve that they will forever be remembered by a grateful Nation, and pray that our country may always prove worthy of the sacrifices they have made.

Throughout our Nation's history, our course has been secured by brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen. These courageous and selfless warriors have stepped forward to protect the Nation they love, fight for America's highest ideals, and show millions that a future of liberty is possible. Freedoms come at great costs, yet the world has been transformed in unimaginable ways because of the noble service and devotion to duty of these brave individuals. Our country honors the sacrifice made by those who have given their lives to spread the blessings of liberty and lay the foundations of peace, and we mourn their loss.

Today, our service men and women continue to inspire and strengthen our Nation, going above and beyond the call of duty as part of the greatest military the world has ever known. Americans are grateful to all those who have put on our Nation's uniform and to their families, and we will always remember their service and sacrifice for our freedoms.

On this solemn day our country unites to pay tribute to the fallen, who demonstrated the strength of their convictions and paid the cost of freedom. We pray for the members of our Armed Forces and their families, and we ask for God's continued guidance of our country.

In respect for their devotion to America, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved on May 11, 1950, as amended (64 Stat. 158), has requested the President to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe each Memorial Day as a day of prayer for permanent peace and designating a period on that day when the people of the United States might unite in prayer. The Congress, by Public Law 106-579, has also designated the minute beginning at 3:00 p.m. local time on that day as a time for all Americans to observe the National Moment of Remembrance.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Memorial Day, May 26, 2008, as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00 a.m. of that day as a time to unite in prayer. I also ask all Americans

to observe the National Moment of Remembrance beginning at 3:00 p.m., local time, on Memorial Day. I encourage the media to participate in these observances. I also request the Governors of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half staff until noon on this Memorial Day on all buildings, grounds, and naval vessels throughout the United States, and in all areas under its jurisdiction and control. I also request the people of the United States to display the flag at half staff from their homes for the customary forenoon period.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:05 a.m., May 27, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 28.

## Remarks on World Trade Week

May 23, 2008

Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House and the South Lawn. It's a joy to welcome entrepreneurs and business leaders and folks who understand the importance of this country being confident enough to work to open up markets for our goods and products and services. I'm—obviously, some of the exporters are pretty good sales men and women. After all, they let you drive a tractor here on the South Lawn. [Laughter] Imagine what the Secret Service was saying.

I'm really pleased to welcome Members of the Congress; Congressmen Petri and Herger are here. Thanks for coming. Petri is here because he's a—he believes in—the Harley Davidson is a product that people around the world ought to be able to drive by making it more affordable—I suspect that's why you're here—as well as some other trucks made in your State.

I want to thank the members of the Cabinet. Thank you all for being such strong advocates of free and fair trade. We've got the Secretary of Agriculture here, Secretary Schafer. His being here sends a message that the American farmer and rancher expects us to work hard to open up markets for the products they grow. So if you're a farmer out there in the heartland, it seems like you'd want somebody working on your behalf here in Washington to be able to make it easier for you to sell your crops. And that's exactly what we're doing in this administration. Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming.

Carlos Gutierrez is the Secretary of Commerce. Trade means commerce. Elaine Chao is here from the Department of Labor. Madam Secretary, thank you. Your presence here is clear recognition that the more products we sell overseas, the more likely it is somebody's going to work.

And today I'm going to spend some time so our fellow citizens understand the importance of trade by connecting trade with products with jobs. Good jobs policy is a good trade policy.

I appreciate very much Sue Schwab here. She's the U.S. Trade Representative. Her job is to open up markets. And I'm going to talk about three trade agreements that she's worked hard to put in place that open up markets for U.S. goods and services. I really appreciate John Veroneau joining us as well. He's the deputy. His job is to also work with the Ambassador to open up markets.

I want to thank Federico Humbert, the Ambassador *de* Panama. I want to thank Lee Tae-sik, Ambassador from South Korea. I want to thank Mariana Pacheco, who is the Deputy Chief of Mission for the Embassy of Colombia. These are three nations I'm going to be talking about. I want to thank you all for coming. It's a—I really appreciate you giving me a chance to talk about your countries in your presence, because I want your leaders to understand the Bush administration and a lot of Members of Congress believe it's in our national interest that we have free and fair trade with your nations.

I thank the representatives of the companies whose products are here. I want to thank the members of the business community.



And thanks for your caring about your country.

But first of all, the—you know, it's a rough economic times. Small-business owners know what I'm talking about; large-business owners know what I'm talking about. It's a period of uncertainty. And one way to deal with uncertainty in the economy is to work from your strengths. One strength, of course, is to trust the American people. And the best way to trust them is to keep your taxes low. I mean, we really don't need to be sending—[*applause*]. If there's uncertain times, there's no worse signal to send, that, you know, we may be raising your taxes. That creates even more uncertainty. There's got to be consistency in the Tax Code so people can plan, so individuals can plan and small business can plan and large businesses can plan. Congress needs to make the tax relief we passed permanent in order to deal with the uncertainty in the economy.

Of course, they got a huge appetite for spending your money, so it shouldn't surprise you that some up there really do want to raise your taxes. And we'll do everything we can and—that—we're not going to let them raise your taxes. But the best signal that Congress could send, for the sake of economic growth and vitality, is that we're going to keep your taxes low by making the tax cuts permanent.

Another thing Congress can do is pass trade agreements that open up markets. You know, 40 percent of our growth last year—during a time of economic uncertainty, 40 percent of the growth came as a result of exports. So when I say, play to our strength, one of the strengths during this period of time is to continue to export products. If the growth that we had during some quarters, recent quarters was as a result of exports, it seems like we ought to be working to create more exports to be able to sell our goods and services into more markets.

And we have an opportunity to do that by opening up markets with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. You know, we trust you to create jobs. The Government ought to trust you by opening up more markets, by making sure the playing field is level for our producers. That's all we want. We just want to be treated fairly in the world.

For some in Washington, trade is a good political issue. In other words, people think it makes good politics to say, "We're not going to let you trade." But what they've got to understand—those voices of pessimism and voices of protectionism must understand that oftentimes, opening up markets means the difference between giving employees a pay raise or a pay cut. The politicians in Washington who use trade as an issue to frighten voters must understand that opening up markets can mean the difference between expanding the number of workers, as opposed to shrinking the number of workers.

And our fellow citizens, I understand, you know, have got concerns about trade. And the reason why we've asked you to bring some of your products here is to remind people that that motorcycle is made by American workers, and that if we're able to more likely sell those motorcycles into Colombia, for example, or Panama or South Korea, that the worker who made that is more likely to get a pay raise or have somebody else join him or her on the floor. That's the practicality of trade.

The interesting thing about trade as an issue, if you really study the issue of free and fair trade, leaders from both parties have been strong advocates for opening up markets. They really have been. I mean, generally this has been a—not nearly as bitter an issue in the past as it is today. You know, I remember reading about John F. Kennedy's stand on trade. He was a strong believer in free and fair trade. My predecessor, President Clinton, worked hard to open up markets. It's interesting that a lot of the people that worked with the President have been here to the White House to, I guess, first, test my temperature to determine whether I really was willing to strongly advocate opening up markets. And then when they realized that they had a steady ally, were willing to go out and declare publicly that they believed that we ought to open up markets.

And yet today, there's just a different attitude evidently. But I want to thank you for helping to try to change that attitude by bringing a practical—some practical thoughts to this debate, kind of fight through all the rhetoric and remind our fellow citizens that—of some of the facts. One, our economy

grows better when we export. Two, there are jobs. When we talk about trade, we're talking about helping people keep work. And it turns out, if you're working for a company that exports goods and services, you make better money. Isn't that an interesting fact? If you're working for a company that sells goods and services overseas, you're going to make more money than your neighbor in a comparable industry.

If you're a farmer—we got some products here, grown right here in the United States of America. If you're a farmer, it seems like you want people to work hard to make it easier for you to sell that orange somewhere else. Increased demand means it's more likely you'll be able to sell your crop.

Trade is in the interests of the working people here in America, pure and simple. Trade is in the interests of small-business owners and farmers and ranchers, pure and simple. And that's why I'm a strong believer that the United States Congress needs to pass trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea.

Now let me give you some of the practical lessons of why. Take dairy products. There's a 20-percent tariff on dairy products from the United States into Colombia; 36 percent into Korea. That means that the cost of that dairy product—chunk of cheese—you know something about cheese, Petri, in Wisconsin—a chunk of cheese is going to be 20 percent more expensive, which makes it harder to sell that product.

When you say, level the playing field, what I'm talking about is reducing tariffs on goods and services, which makes it easier to sell. In other words, it's less expensive. The quality is the same. We're really good at what we make and what we grow. The quality is the same, but the price is less, which makes it more likely something is going to be purchased.

Fruits, oranges—these oranges right here are taxed at 15 percent going into Colombia—they're 15 percent more expensive, 30 percent more in South Korea, and 15 percent more in Panama. Broccoli—they got a really high tariff on broccoli at my father's house. [Laughter] But there also happens to be one—15 percent in Colombia, 27 percent in South Korea, and 15 percent in Panama.

So those are percentages, but you need to think about the percentage in terms of, it's that much more expensive to buy. And sometimes if you're shopping for an orange, that 15-percent differential means you're not going to buy it. Motorcycle—that motorcycle right there is 20 percent more expensive in Colombia, 8 percent more in Korea, and 15 percent more in Panama.

And so the purpose of a trade agreement is to reduce those tariffs, is to make the products less expensive. So if we get the deal done with Colombia, that motorcycle will be \$4,000 less expensive. The great quality of Harley will be the same. There will be no diminution of how cool one is when they drive a Harley. [Laughter] But it's going to be easier for somebody to buy it.

This Case tractor—by the way, manufactured in Fargo, North Dakota—called a Case IH, will be \$15,500 cheaper in Colombia. That could be a significant difference when it comes to somebody buying that tractor. And I hope the Case workers hear me loud and clear: The cheaper that is for somebody to buy in Colombia, the more work you're going to have.

The reason I brought these products here is, it means somebody is making them today and is going to be able to make them tomorrow if we'd level that playing field. And let me tell you why I talk about leveling the playing field. The first vote coming up is Colombia. I say, the first vote coming up is Colombia—you might remember, the vote has never been allowed to come up. The Speaker of the House pulled a parliamentary maneuver that sent a bad signal, and so it hasn't come up yet.

Our job is to say, let the people vote, let the Members of Congress vote. I like our chances if they let the Members of Congress vote. Congress has a way of sorting through all the noise and all the pessimism and often-times reaches the right conclusion.

Most of the goods coming from Colombia enter America duty free—isn't that interesting—as a result of actions of Congress in the past. Most goods that Colombia makes comes to our country without any tax. And I've just described to you, the goods and services we send to Colombia are taxed. And that, frankly, doesn't seem very fair to me. It didn't

seem fair to the Colombian Government either. They all—they agree with me: Let's just treat each other fairly.

Their goods are not taxed; our goods are. It seems unfair to me. And people of Congress should understand how unfair it is to the workers in their districts or the farmers in their districts or the people who are working hard for a living in their districts that count upon selling goods overseas.

So the agreement we reached basically says that those oranges will go in duty free. Some of the products will go in duty free immediately; some of them will be phased in over time; but nevertheless, the playing field will be level. So here you hear, free and fair trade; that's the definition of free and fair trade. Colombia treats us just like we treat them. That's fair.

Secondly, the Colombia free trade vote, like these other free trade votes, have got national security implications. Colombia has got a very bold leader named President Uribe, who is a reformist. Panama has got a strong leader, who, by the way, went to Texas A&M University. He's a reformist. I had the honor of meeting the South Korean President at Camp David—first South Korean President to have come to Camp David—and I did so for a reason. Because I wanted to send a strong signal about our friendship with the people of South Korea. He's a strong, strong leader. All these leaders have got a clear vision about enhanced prosperity in their country. They care deeply about their people.

President Uribe has got a unique challenge in Colombia. He's facing a group of narcotraffickers who are violent, who use force to achieve political objectives, who are supported by some of the countries in the neighborhood. They're a threat to peace inside Colombia, and they provide a threat to the United States, in the sense that they—to the extent that they facilitate drug trafficking. It makes it here. And yet the President has stood strong in dealing with these folks. He is a clear example of a leader who has set the—an agenda that is bold, and he's following through with that agenda.

If we were to turn our back on Colombia by rejecting the free trade agreement, it would send a terrible signal to leaders willing

to be courageous. It would send a bad signal to our friends. And in the case of Colombia, it would send a bad signal to the voices of false populism in South America. It's in our economic interest that we pass trade agreements. Oh, I know there's great debate about that. But I hope that people listen to the facts and understand the practical consequences of opening up markets for the products made here in the United States. Then they'll understand why all of us are so passionate about making sure we're treated fairly.

There's also a significant national security concern when it comes to America turning its back on friends. The region needs democracy; the region needs rule of law; the region needs stability; and the region needs strong leaders like President Uribe. And a rejection of the free trade agreement with Colombia will undermine that which the leader—the region needs.

It's interesting, I've been—you know, I constantly talk to fellow leaders on the telephone, and as you know, I've been traveling as well. And the—I've been asked quite frequently, "Why is it that your Congress won't pass a free trade agreement with Colombia, for starters?" And they ask that question first with amazement. They can't believe the great United States of America is not confident enough or wise enough to level the playing field when it comes to U.S. goods and services.

And once the tone of amazement passes, then there's this serious tone of concern—concerned about the United States becoming protectionist, concern about the United States losing its confidence when it comes to the entrepreneurial spirit that has made us great, concerned that we really don't seem to care about the plight of others. Because trade helps lift people out of poverty. Trade is a powerful engine for change.

And all I can tell them is, is that politics is too strong right now. But I also tell them, I haven't given up hope. I haven't given up hope that that Colombia free trade agreement is going to make it to the floor of the Congress, and with your help, I hope you get it there. I haven't given up hope that the people will recognize that obstructionism is not leadership, that obstructing an important piece of legislation, not even allowing it to

come to the floor for a vote, is not what the people expect.

And so my call on the leadership in the House is to let this trade agreement get to the floor; let the representatives of the people decide; let there be an open and honest debate about the merits of this piece of legislation—the merits from an economic perspective and the merits from a national security perspective. And then when you pass a Colombia free trade bill, we go to South Korea and Panama and get those bills passed. And then we can go to the people who are making these products here and say, we did the job you expected us to do.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Martin Torrijos Espino of Panama; and President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### **Proclamation 8261—National Hurricane Preparedness Week, 2008** *May 23, 2008*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

National Hurricane Preparedness Week highlights the vital importance of being prepared when natural disasters strike.

Tropical storms can cause destruction over entire regions and claim the lives of many of our citizens. We can help reduce vulnerability in our communities by encouraging all citizens to be prepared and to work together. Maintaining emergency supply kits and family communication plans, and knowing what to do in an emergency can help save lives. For more information on hurricane preparedness, Americans can visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) and [fema.gov](http://fema.gov) to find checklists and other valuable resources to help them get prepared.

My Administration continues to support efforts to strengthen how Americans prepare for and respond to disasters. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration works to predict and track storms so that citi-

zens are more aware of potential storms. The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has improved communication between Federal, State, local government, and the private sector in order to help citizens stay informed and receive the help they need. By working together, we can better prepare for, respond to, and recover from hurricanes and reduce the harm to our citizens and our communities.

As hurricane season approaches, we also express our gratitude to the volunteers and first responders who help their fellow citizens in their time of need.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 25 through May 31, 2008, as National Hurricane Preparedness Week. I call upon government agencies, private organizations, schools, and the media to share information about hurricane preparedness. I also urge all Americans living in vulnerable coastal areas to take appropriate measures and precautions to protect themselves, their homes, and their communities against the effects of hurricanes.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:50 a.m., May 28, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 29. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

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### **Digest of Other White House Announcements**

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The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

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**May 17**

In the morning, at Al Janadriyah Farm in Al Janadriyah, Saudi Arabia, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had breakfast with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where, upon arrival at Sharm el-Sheikh International Airport, they participated in a greeting with President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and his wife, Suzanne Thabet.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Four Seasons Resort, where he met with President Mubarak. They then had a working lunch. Later, he traveled to the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh.

In the evening, the President had a working dinner with President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority.

**May 18**

In the morning, the President met with King Abdullah II of Jordan. He then met with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Maritim Sharm El Sheikh International Congress Center. Later, they returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

**May 19**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, mudslides, and landslides on April 3 and 4.

**May 20**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Mrs. Bush met with Japan's outgoing Ambassador to the U.S. Ryzo Kato and his wife, Hanayo.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will travel to Slovenia, Germany, Italy, the Holy See, France, and the United Kingdom from June 9–16.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes beginning on May 2 and continuing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Asif J. Chaudhry to be Ambassador to Moldova.

The President announced his intention to nominate Husein A. Cumber to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tina S. Kaidanow to be Ambassador to Kosovo.

The President announced his intention to appoint Grant S. Green and Dov S. Zakheim as members of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**May 21**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander-in-Chief George J. Lisicki.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Nasrallah Boutros Cardinal Sfeir, the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East.

**May 22**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Pope Air Force Base, NC, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Amy Petrenko. He then traveled to Fort Bragg, NC, where he presented medals to soldiers and family members of soldiers killed in the war on terror.

In the afternoon, the President toured Barracks C-4122 and C-5624. Later, at the 82d Airborne Division War Memorial Museum, he attended the All American Memorial Ceremony and the unveiling of the Global War on Terror Memorial. He then returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and record and near record snow on May 1 and 2.

The President announced his intention to nominate David F. Girard-diCarlo to be Ambassador to Austria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick J. Durkin to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael B. Bemis to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate John J. Faso, Joe Manchin III, and Harvey M. Tettlebaum to be members of the Board of Trustees of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew S. Petersen to be a member of the Federal Election Commission.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joseph Cascio as Federal Environmental Executive of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gary S. Becker, Lucille Shapiro, and Robert J. Zimmer as members of the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science.

The President announced his intention to designate Matthew W. Friedrich as Acting Assistant Attorney General (Criminal Division).

The President announced his intention to designate Jason J. Fichtner as Acting Deputy Commissioner of Social Security.

The President announced his intention to designate Linda P.B. Katehi as Chairman of the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science.

### **May 23**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he participated in a Homeland Security Council meeting, where he was briefed on the upcoming hurricane season. Then, on the South Lawn, he participated in an interview with Neil Cavuto of FOX News.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President declared a major disaster in Georgia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the

area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on May 11 and 12.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on May 10 and 11.

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## **Nominations Submitted to the Senate**

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The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

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### **Submitted May 20**

Asif J. Chaudhry,  
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Moldova.

Husein A. Cumber,  
of Florida, to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2013, vice W. Douglas Buttrey, term expiring.

Tina S. Kaidanow,  
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Kosovo.

### **Withdrawn May 20**

A. Paul Anderson,  
of Florida, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for the term expiring June 30, 2012 (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on August 2, 2007.

Arlene Holen,  
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2010, vice Robert H. Beatty,

Jr., term expired, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

Hans von Spakovsky, of Georgia, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2011, vice Bradley A. Smith, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on January 9, 2007.

#### ***Submitted May 22***

Michael B. Bemis, of Mississippi, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2013, vice Skila Harris, resigned.

Patrick J. Durkin, of Connecticut, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation for a term expiring December 17, 2009, vice Ned L. Siegel, term expired.

John J. Faso, of New York, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation for a term expiring May 29, 2013, vice David Wesley Fleming, term expired.

David F. Girard-diCarlo, of Pennsylvania, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Austria.

Joe Manchin III, of West Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation for a term expiring November 5, 2012, vice George Perdue, term expired.

Harvey M. Tettlebaum, of Missouri, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation for a term expiring October 3, 2012, vice Marc R. Pacheco, term expired.

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### **Checklist of White House Press Releases**

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The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

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#### ***Released May 18***

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 6051

Advance text of the President's remarks to the World Economic Forum in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

#### ***Released May 19***

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by Counselor to the President Edward W. Gillespie on the President's interview with Richard Engel of NBC News in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 6022

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kentucky

#### ***Released May 20***

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President and Mrs. Bush's upcoming visit to Europe

Statement by the Press Secretary on Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

#### ***Released May 21***

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Office of Management and Budget Director James A. Nussle

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino and National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Daniel W. Fisk

Fact sheet: Promoting Democracy in Cuba

***Released May 22***

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Dakota

Fact sheet: An Opportunity To Reconsider a Wasteful Farm Bill

***Released May 23***

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 3029

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Georgia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Fact sheet: Expanding Economic Opportunities Through Free and Fair Trade

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**Acts Approved  
by the President**

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***Approved May 18***

H.R. 6051 / Public Law 110–231

To amend Public Law 110–196 to provide for a temporary extension of programs authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 beyond May 16, 2008

***Approved May 19***

H.R. 6022 / Public Law 110–232

Strategic Petroleum Reserve Fill Suspension and Consumer Protection Act of 2008

***Approved May 21***

H.R. 493 / Public Law 110–233

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008

***Passed May 22, over the President's veto***

H.R. 2419 / Public Law 110–234

Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008

***Approved May 23***

S. 3029 / Public Law 110–235

To provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, and for other purposes